

Cracks Down On Oil Industry And Federal Regulators



Sarasota, Florida – Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) announced today he will introduce sweeping legislation to hold oil companies accountable for offshore spills and reform the federal oversight process to ensure disasters like the Deepwater Horizon never happen again.

Buchanan's bill, the "Oil Spill Prevention Act" will be introduced in the U.S. House on Tuesday. It would rescind liability protections currently enjoyed by Big Oil and mandate that regular inspections occur as scheduled. Deepwater Horizon missed 16 inspections before it exploded, creating the worst environmental disaster in our nation's history.

Buchanan's bill was endorsed today by environmentalists, business leaders and local elected officials at a press conference on Lido Key public beach.

“We have to do everything possible to plug the leak and take strong action to make sure it never happens again,” Buchanan said. “There is more than enough blame to go around, starting with British Petroleum’s disgraceful effort to cut corners to save time and money. Federal regulators also need to be held accountable for failing to protect the public’s safety by granting waivers for environmental permits, skipping inspections and negotiating jobs with the very oil companies they were responsible for regulating.”

Buchanan’s bill would do the following:

- Prevent conflicts of interest by separating the inspections office responsible for safety and environmental protection from the leasing office, which collects revenues;
- Require random drug testing;
- Eliminate the revolving door between MMS and oil companies by requiring MMS employees to wait a minimum of two years before working for an oil company;
- Strengthen oversight by mandating that missed inspections be rescheduled and eliminating categorical exemptions from environmental requirements; and
- Eliminate the cap on the financial liability of oil companies responsible for offshore spills.

Sarasota Visitors and Convention Bureau President Virginia Haley said the bill would fix a broken regulatory process. “The time is now to address the dysfunctional nature of this regulatory process,” said Haley. “Sarasota’s beaches are beautiful and yet we can see the economic distress for our hotels, fishing guides and restaurants caused by an oil spill 300 miles away.”

Sarasota County Commissioner Jon Thaxton, a leading environmentalist in the region said Buchanan bill will help protect the environment. “Congressman Buchanan continues to support

sound energy policy that recognized the need to secure national interests, develop energy initiative as economic drivers and preserve and protect our fragile natural environment," said Thaxton.